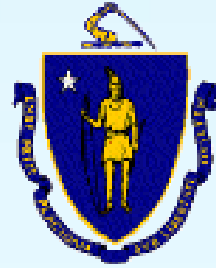


# **New Visitor Center at Walden Pond State Reservation**



**DCR Public Meeting**  
September 30, 2014  
Harvey Wheeler Community Center, Concord



# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor

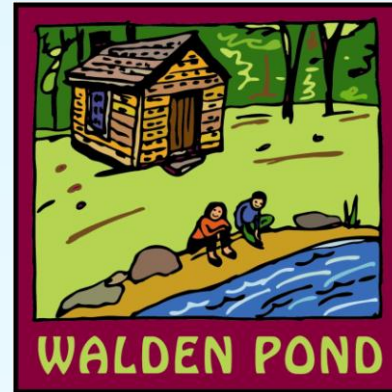
**Deval L. Patrick**

Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary

**Maeve Vallely Bartlett**

Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner

**John P. Murray**



## DCR Mission Statement

*To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.*

# Project Team

**MARYANN THOMPSON  
ARCHITECTS**

**Maryann Thompson Architects:**  
Architecture, Prime Consultant

**MICHAEL  
VAN  
VALKENBURGH  
ASSOCIATES  
INC**

**Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates:**  
Landscape Architects

**Object IDEA**

**ObjectIDEA:**  
Interpretive Planning and Exhibition Design



**Garcia, Galuska & DeSousa**  
Consulting Engineers, Inc.

**Garcia, Galuska & DeSousa, Consulting Engineers:**  
MEP/FP engineering

# Tonight's Meeting

## Purpose

To update and solicit input from stakeholders and the public on the design of a new Visitor Center at Walden Pond State Reservation

## Agenda

- Overview of Walden Pond State Reservation and current needs
- Project process and history
- Presentation of the Visitor Center project
- Project Benefits
- Open comment period





# What is Walden Pond?

- Internationally acclaimed National Historic Landmark
- Sought out by visitors for contemplation because of its associations with:
  - Henry David Thoreau
  - the flowering of American literature
  - the development of the modern environmental movement
- A heavily visited recreational facility during the summer months



# Walden Pond State Reservation Overview

- Reservation contains 335 acres
- Visitor Activities
  - Historical / cultural exploration
  - Conditions of 1922 Transfer Deed
    - Bathing
    - Picnicking
    - Boating (non-motorized)
    - Fishing
  - Hiking / Walking
- Key Facilities
  - Park Headquarters
  - Beach/Bathhouse
  - Thoreau Cabin Site / Cabin Replica
- Approximately 500,000 visitors annually





# New Visitor Center – Why Now?

The existing park headquarters building was not intended to be a visitor center and thus does not communicate the property's significance. The current space only features a small gallery, administrative / office space, and a bookstore.



A new visitor center will provide:

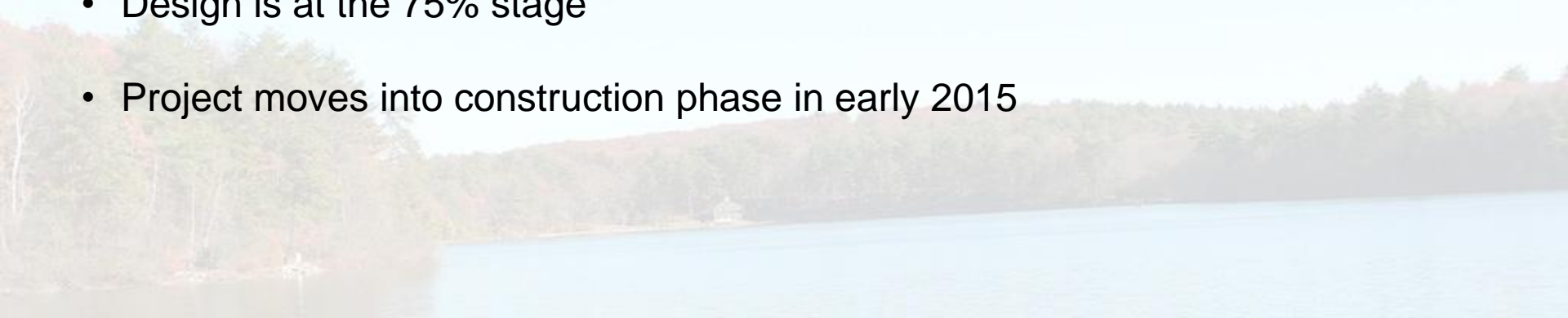
- a dedicated space for interpretive exhibits.
- weather protected space for interpretive programming.
- adequate space for staff office/meeting space, as the current spaces are cramped and laid out poorly.
- sufficient public bathroom facilities. The current comfort station building is on a composting system that suffers from overuse.



# Project Process – Then and Now

The need for a Visitor Center at Walden Pond has been identified since the 1970s

- Previous planning studies conducted in 1974 and 1993 recommended construction of a visitor center for the Reservation.
- DCR Resource Management Plan (RMP) / Visitor Services Master Plan were prepared to initiate visitor center planning.
- A building study for the new Visitor Center began in June 2012.
- Study complete and design underway with Maryann Thompson Architects in 2014
- Design is at the 75% stage
- Project moves into construction phase in early 2015



# Public Meeting History

## **December 8, 2010 – Kick-Off Meeting**

- Elicit public input on issues to be addressed during the planning process

## **March 24, 2011 – Visitor Center and Visitor Services Meeting**

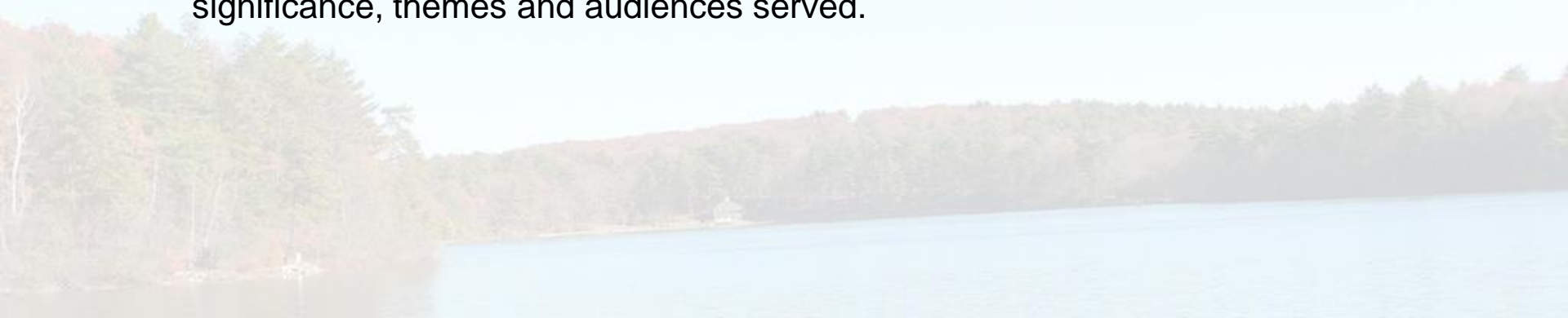
- Existing visitor services and programs. Examples of DCR Visitor Centers to discuss program and character of new building

## **November 17, 2011 – Visitor Services Master Plan Meeting**

- Presentation of management goals and recommendations for the program and siting of a new visitor center and other issues to be addressed during design

## **March 27, 2012 – Interpretive Planning Workshop**

- Received public input on the “Walden Experience” including statements of significance, themes and audiences served.



# Project Overview

## Solar Parking Canopy / Utility Improvements

- On-site power to provide for the needs of the new visitor center
- Shade and cover for adjacent parking spaces
- Title V compliant wastewater system

## New Visitor Center Building

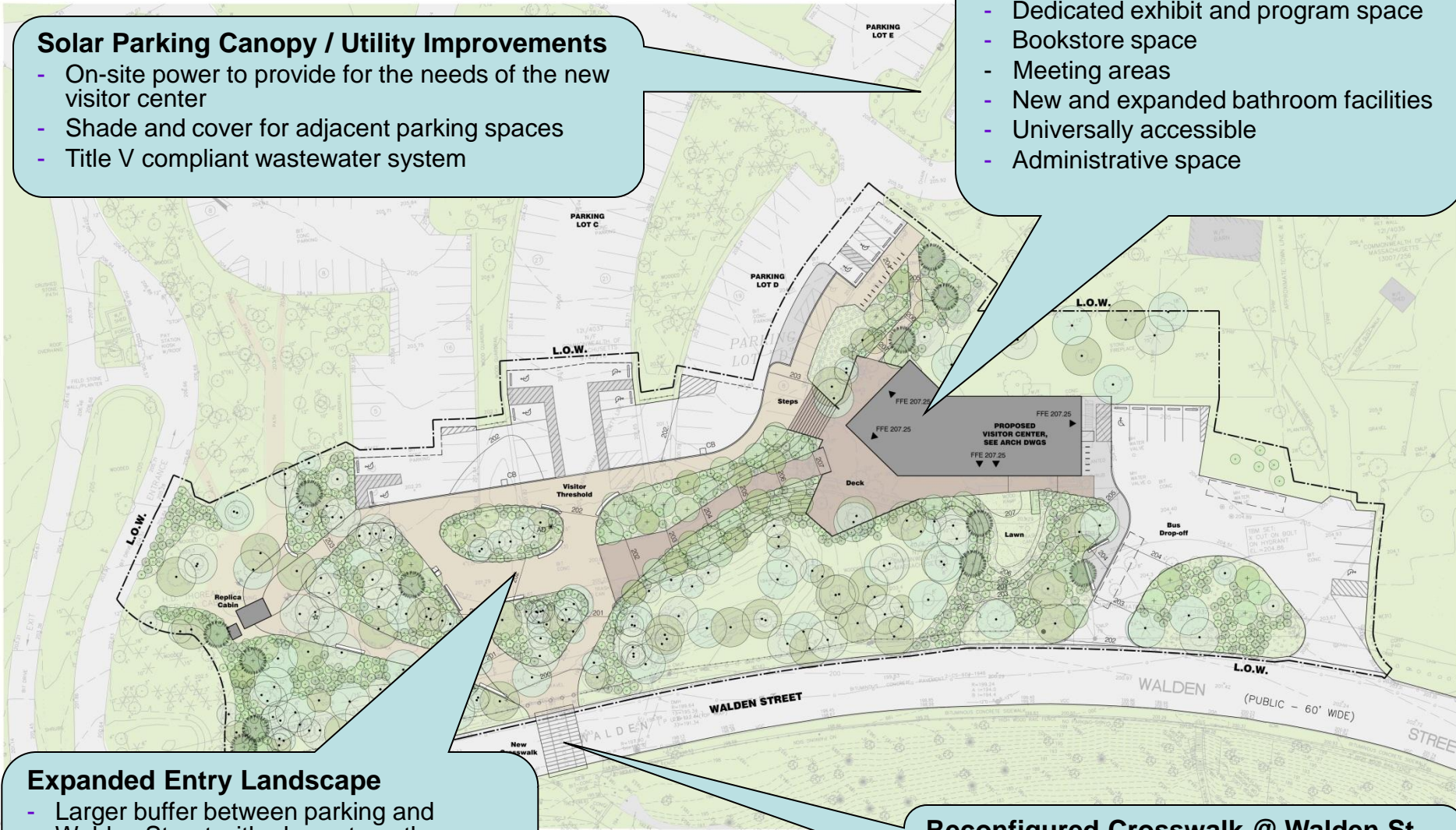
- Dedicated exhibit and program space
- Bookstore space
- Meeting areas
- New and expanded bathroom facilities
- Universally accessible
- Administrative space

## Expanded Entry Landscape

- Larger buffer between parking and Walden Street with places to gather or wait when crossing to trails and beach
- Activation of area around replica cabin and new visitor center

## Reconfigured Crosswalk @ Walden St.

- Clearly marked crosswalk to aid in pedestrian safety getting to and from trails and beach area





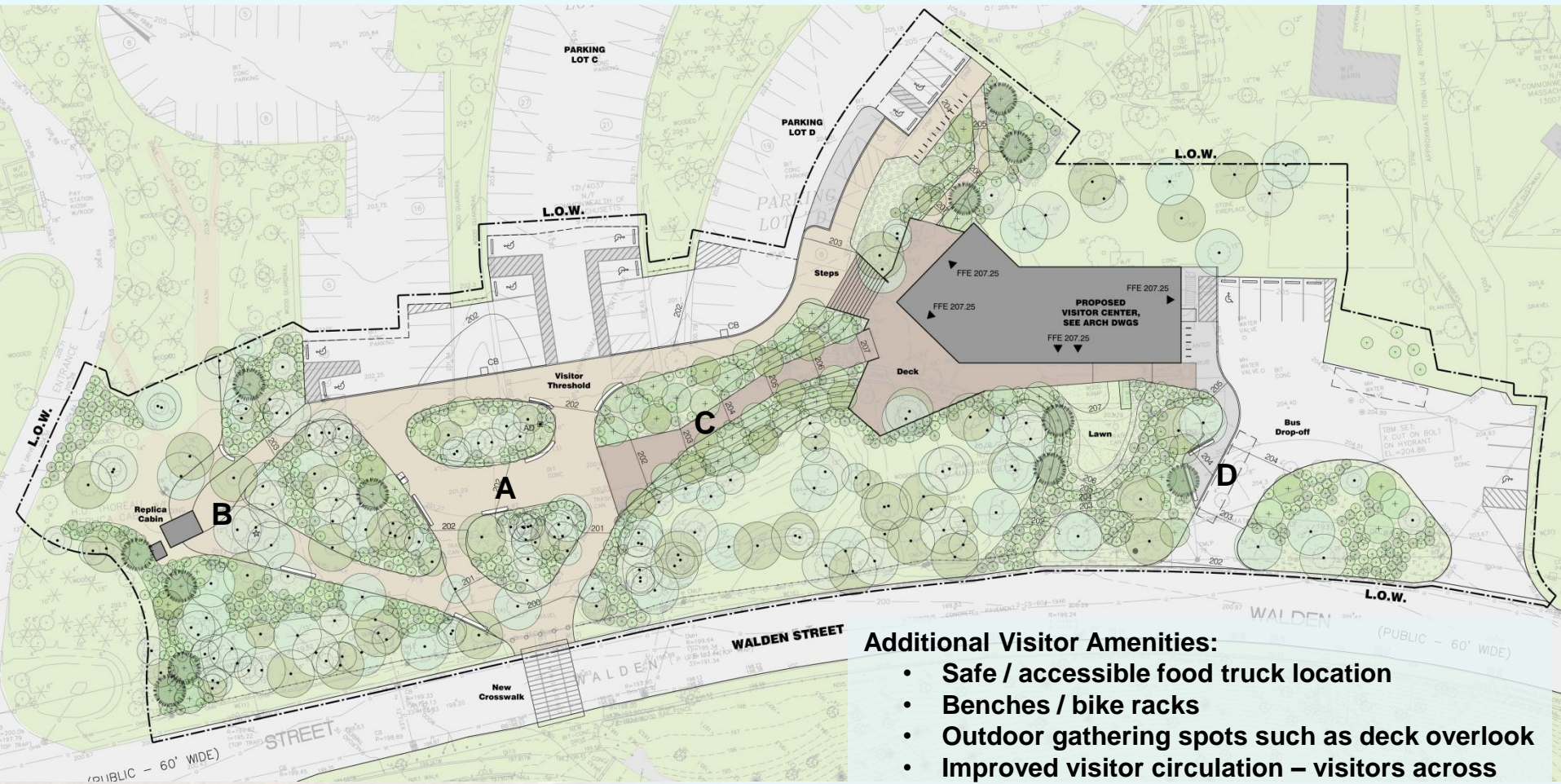
# Landscape Improvements

**A** – Expanded arrival landscape zone with benches and park information kiosk

**B** – Replica Cabin site improved with accessible path and revitalized plantings

**C** – Long, gently sloped path creates connection from Visitor Center to arrival landscape

**D** – Improved bus drop off area, no longer in front of Visitor Center



## Additional Visitor Amenities:

- Safe / accessible food truck location
- Benches / bike racks
- Outdoor gathering spots such as deck overlook
- Improved visitor circulation – visitors across parking lot, to crosswalk



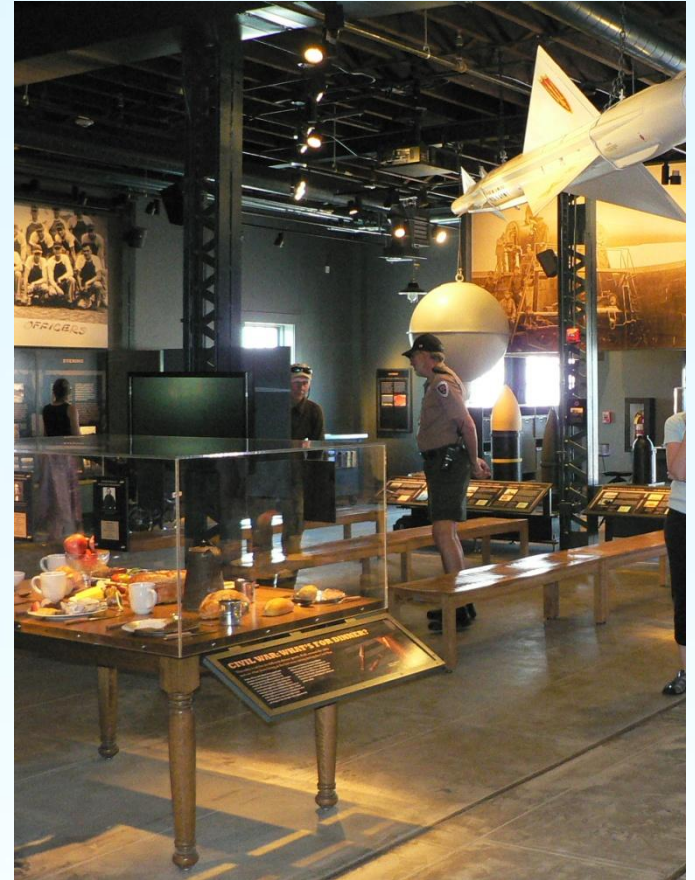
# Precedent Visitor Centers – Inspiration



Polly Hill Arboretum,  
Martha's Vineyard

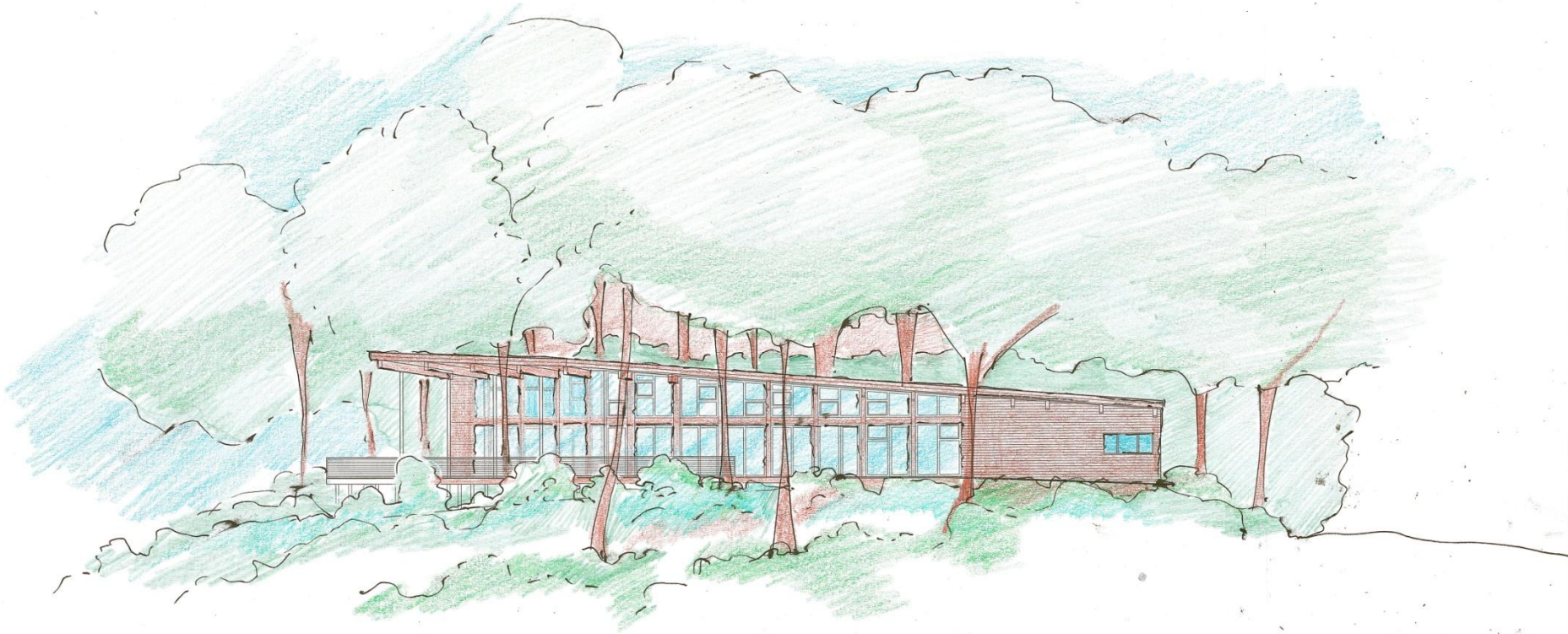


# Precedent Visitor Centers



Georges Island, Boston

# Visitor Center Views



## Guiding Principles:

- Unassuming character as opposed to a “statement” building
- Interwoven into landscape
- Zero Net Energy – LEED Silver
- Live simply on the land while creating a gateway to educate the public about Walden



# Visitor Center Views





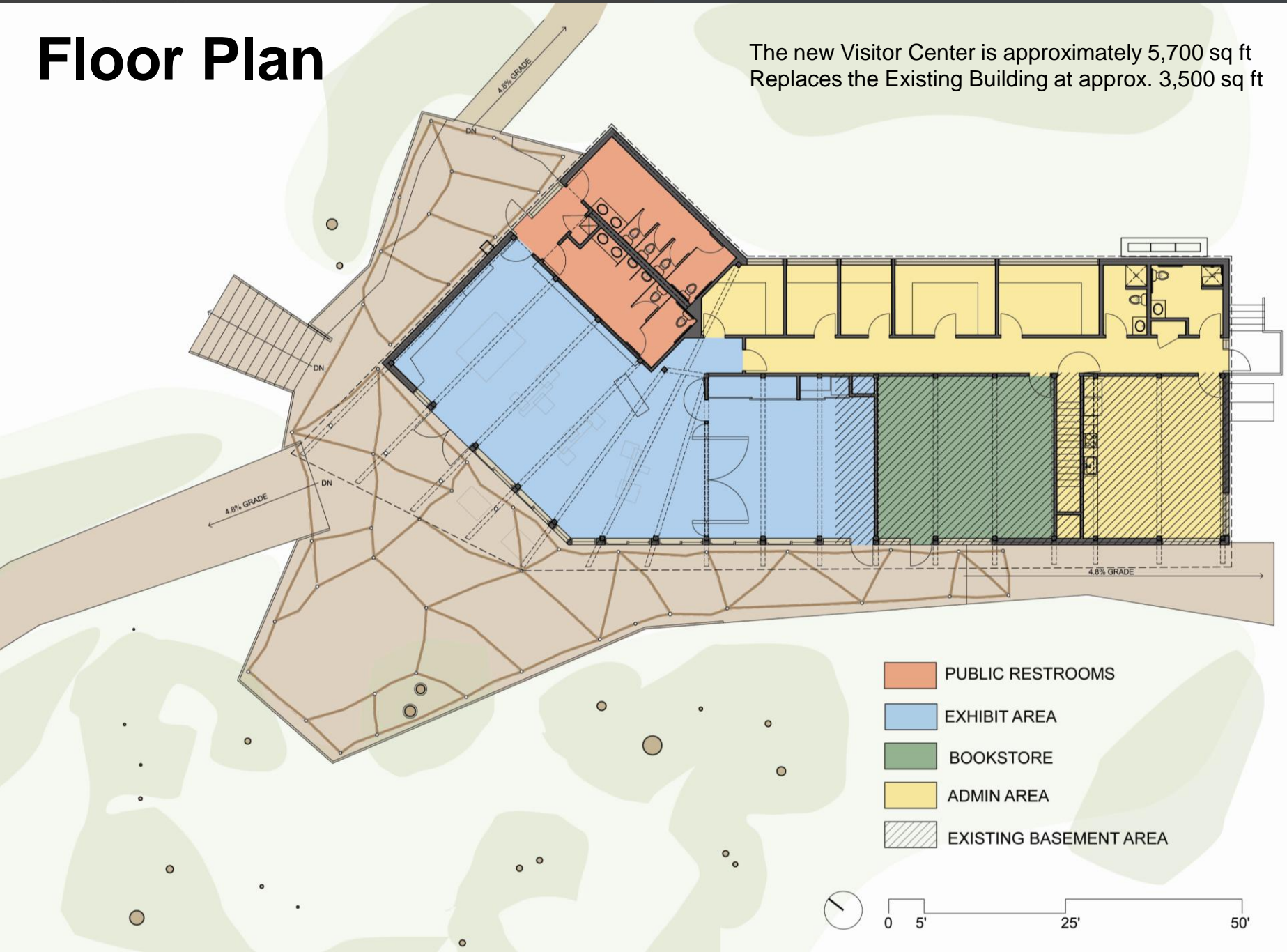
# Visitor Center Views





# Floor Plan

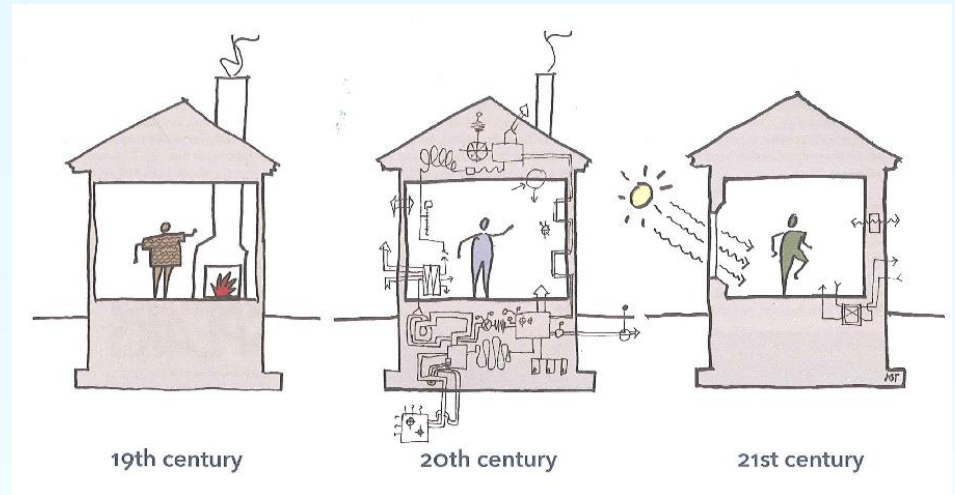
The new Visitor Center is approximately 5,700 sq ft  
Replaces the Existing Building at approx. 3,500 sq ft



# Sustainable Elements

The new Visitor Center is intended to tread lightly on the earth – designed as a Net Zero Building that will be LEED Silver certified. A number of sustainable strategies have been incorporated into its design, including:

- A super-insulated building envelope and highly energy efficient triple-pane windows
- Passive solar building orientation and openings
- Natural ventilation/cooling
- Daylighting for most of the spaces
- All electric air-to-air heatpump HVAC system, eliminating the need for on-site fossil fuels
- Solar hot water system for building hot water needs
- Sustainable materials and practices
- Native plants in the landscape
- Photovoltaic parking canopy structure to generate on-site electricity





# Interpretive Design

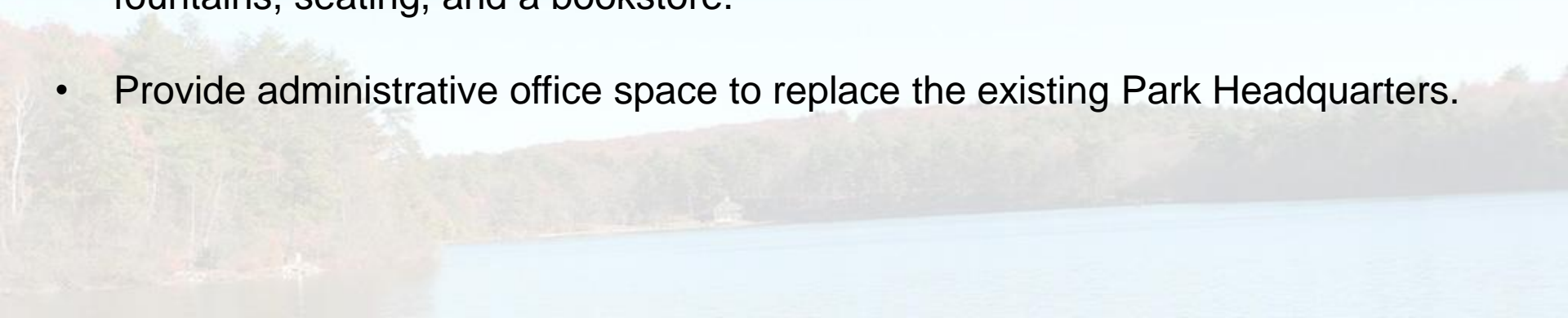


- Guiding Principles: The Pond is the Visitor Center
- Elements of Interpretive Program: Nature, History, and Inspiration



# Project Benefits

- Serve as a gateway to the Reservation, introducing visitors to all aspects of Walden Pond (environmental, cultural and recreational).
- Will function as a gateway for other Thoreau-related sites in the area such as Walden Woods Project, Concord Museum, Brister's Hill, Thoreau Farm, Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.
- Provide the opportunity for all visitors to learn about the significance of Walden Pond and to encourage stewardship and inspiration.
  - Orient visitors to the key resources of the Reservation.
  - Provide weather-protected space for interpretive programming
- Provide upgraded visitor amenities including expanded restrooms, drinking fountains, seating, and a bookstore.
- Provide administrative office space to replace the existing Park Headquarters.



# Funding Summary

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$7.2 million

- Majority of project funding covered by DCR
- Seeking private contributions
- Potential state grants from Department of Energy Resources and Department of Environmental Protection



# Next Steps / Schedule

- Public Comment Period (runs through October 14<sup>th</sup>)
- Construction of “Early Action” components currently scheduled to begin in late Fall
  - Utility Improvements
  - Solar PV Array in Parking Lots E and F
- Development of final construction plans (December 2014)
- Contractor Selection for Construction (March 2015)
- Construction Starts (Spring 2015)
- Occupancy (Spring 2016)

# Walden Pond State Reservation- What to Expect During Construction 2015-2016

- Walden Pond will be open during construction
- Beach and bathhouse operation will continue
- Restrooms in parking lot will be provided
- Programs and special events will continue

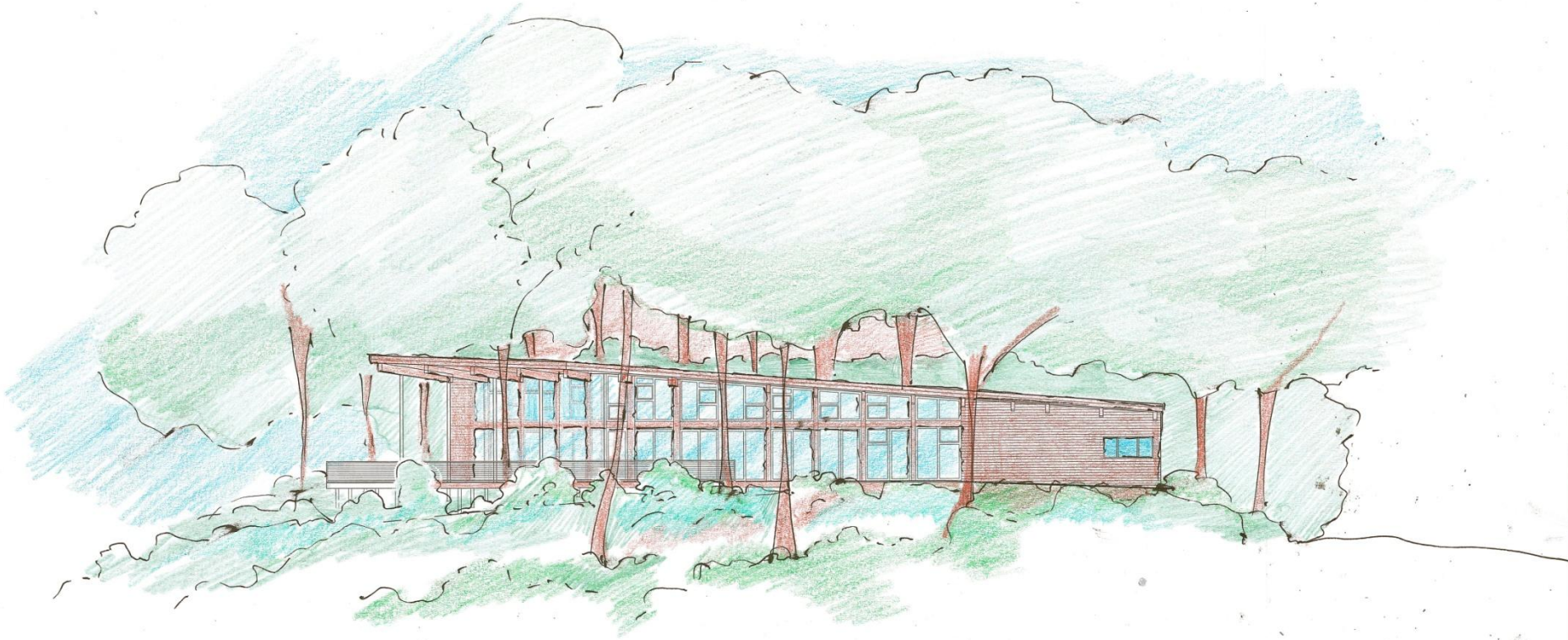




# Walden Pond: Looking Beyond the Visitor Center

- Complete landscape improvements on the pond side of Route 126 – provide universal access from roadway to beach
- Expand interpretive improvements and signage on pond side
- Restore eastern shoreline bank of Walden Pond
- Improve the beach bathhouse – canopy, upgrade interior spaces, exterior improvements and informational exhibit

# Q / A



# Additional Information

For more information:

–Web: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/public-outreach/public-meetings/>

If you have comments or would like to subscribe to a project-specific email list

Email: [dcr.updates@state.ma.us](mailto:dcr.updates@state.ma.us), noting “**Walden Pond Visitor Center**” in the subject line

Call: 617-626-4974

Write: Department of Conservation and Recreation, Office of Public Outreach, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 600, Boston, MA 02114

Note: Public comments submitted to DCR by email or letter may be posted on the DCR website in their entirety, and no content, including personal information, will be redacted.

If you have questions or concerns or would like to be added to an email list to receive DCR general announcements:

Email: [MassParks@state.ma.us](mailto:MassParks@state.ma.us)

Call: 617-626-4973